

Central Intelligence Agency



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DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

17 January 1984

MEXICO'S LEFTIST PARTIES IN RECENT MONTHS [REDACTED]

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Summary

In the 18 months since publication of "The Opposition Left in Mexico," leftist parties have failed to capitalize on discontent over the nation's dismal economic situation. Leftist candidates have turned in poor electoral showings, efforts to mobilize widespread anti-austerity demonstrations have faltered, and sectarian squabbles have undermined unity. Concern that falling standards of living will increase popular dissension and foster support for radical solutions nevertheless has prompted President de la Madrid to repress some leftist activities. At present, however, a turn to armed action by leftist parties is unlikely and they pose little immediate threat to the ruling party's political hegemony. [REDACTED]

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Efforts to Broaden Appeal

Leftist moves to cultivate support among mass-based interest groups are yielding disappointing harvests. Because middle class intellectuals control leadership slots and chart the leftist strategy, organizational efforts among labor and peasant groups appear to lack focus and intensity. New inroads into organized labor--a major objective since unions are a key pillar of the

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ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI)--are minimal. Union officials have rejected overtures of a Communist-labor alliance and workers, despite declining wages, show few signs of alienation from the system that has served them so well. Even though sporadic work stoppages by Communist-dominated teacher's unions have embarrassed the administration, independent unions are not attracting new adherents and have not tried to confront the government over its wage policy. Leftist tacticians have been unable to parlay their myriad nominal alliances with small peasant groups into nationwide backing. Similarly, toeholds in slum-dweller organizations have not grown substantially. Even the majority of the middle class remains convinced the left offers little except rhetoric. [redacted]

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Electoral Performance

Underscoring its dearth of support among the political mainstream, the left performed poorly in state and local elections last year. Sharp criticism of de la Madrid's economic policies [redacted]

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[redacted] won the left media attention but its lack of financial resources and its serious organizational deficiencies took their toll. Leftists finished a distant third to the center right National Action Party in most races and tallied just a handful of scattered victories in small rural towns. This lackluster performance shows little likelihood of improving in 1984. [redacted]

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Leftist Unity

Unity continues to elude the left. Tactical, ideological, and personal differences plaguing the Unified Socialist Party (PSUM) remain unresolved and are contributing to the left's poor public image. Party dissidents--particularly those with pro-Soviet leanings--appear on the verge of breaking away, irritated with the leadership's reluctance to attack the government for its harsh economic policies. [redacted]

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[redacted] dissident elements also resent the reelection of Secretary General Pablo Gomez, whom they regard as bureaucratic, despotic, and out of touch with popular concerns. [redacted]

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In addition, other major leftist opposition groups are not only refusing to join the coalition but are pirating members from it. Several small splinter groups maintain alliances of convenience with the PSUM, but the important Mexican Workers Party terminated merger talks last fall. Further underscoring leftist disunity, the Unified Socialists and the Trotskyite

Revolutionary Worker's Party (PRT) field competing front groups. [REDACTED]

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Prospects for Violence

National leftist leaders are no more prepared to endorse militant solutions now than they have been in the past. They realize that while the government is willing to overlook moral and political support to Central American guerrillas--which dovetails with official policy--it would react forcefully against domestic insurgents. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Reflecting both the Communists' view that their primary function is to raise the political consciousness of the people and their awareness of government sensitivities, protest marches have concentrated on issues--primarily Washington's Central American policy--where the governing elite and leftist leaders are generally in tune. [REDACTED]

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Outlook

Mexico has a long way to go to escape its economic doldrums, and the opportunities for the left to broaden its popular appeal will remain high. But such opportunities seem likely to be lost since the left has yet to display the ability to resolve crippling internal bickering. Moreover, de la Madrid's strong performance during his first year in office and the PRI's continued ability to adapt to changing circumstances suggest that Mexico City will be able to handle any challenges likely to arise.

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